

Testimony of Tracy Flater, Executive Director  
Playhouse on Park Theater  
March 2, 2015  
Connecticut General Assembly  
Appropriations Committee

Good Evening Chairwoman Bye, Chairwoman Walker and Members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Tracy Flater and I am the Co-Founder and Executive Director of the non-profit performing arts organization, Playhouse Theatre Group, Inc. With me this evening, are the Co-Presidents of the Playhouse Theatre Group, Board of Directors, Bonnie Gauthier and Carol McCabe. We sincerely thank you for providing us with the opportunity to speak to you this evening.

Playhouse Theatre Group, Inc. was founded on May 1, 2009 and immediately took over management of the vacant theatre space located at 244 Park Road in West Hartford, now known as Playhouse on Park. In just 5.5 years, Playhouse on Park has become the anchor of the Park Road neighborhood and an award winning regional theatre that embraces the community through it's affordability, accessibility, extensive educational and outreach programs and our highly regarded, unparalleled hybrid model which enables professionals to work alongside members of the community including students.

On behalf of all involved with Playhouse Theatre Group and Playhouse on Park, I am here to respectfully ask for your financial support through designated funding in the Governor's fiscal year 2016-2017 budget.

Playhouse Theatre Group's 2014-15 operating budget is just shy of \$1,000,000 and will slightly exceed that amount in 2015-16. Like all arts organizations we fund approximately 50% of that budget through earned revenue and the remainder is raised through a delicate balance of public and private funding. I cannot emphasize enough, the enormous value of funding through a designated line item. While we are hugely appreciative of funding through grants, grant writing costs organizations like ours additional revenue and resources.

In the Playhouse's short existence:

- Our educational programs, including our Literature Alive field trip program, which is tied directly to school curriculum will reach over 4,000 students this season alone, and will continue to grow annually
- We have grown to reach close to 40,000 people annually, with continued growth anticipated.
- Patrons come from well over 100 towns across the state of Connecticut, as well as many other states throughout the country.
- We have directly impacted the local restaurants and businesses in the Park Road, Parkville and West Hartford Communities.
- We are the only professional theatre with a professional dance company in residence.

- Our intimate setting and the quality of our work creates an incredibly personal and immersive experience which has been recognized through numerous positive critic reviews, innumerable patron, parent and educator testimonials, and several awards.

We have a long way to go, yet throughout our formative years we have proven to be a credible and valuable member of the arts community. We have come so far despite our start up coinciding with an incredibly poor economic climate. We have faced all of the obstacles a start up non-profit faces, including limited funding sources.

As we grow, and continue to establish ourselves, we now feel it is very appropriate to ask for your consideration for support in the way of funding. Please consider Playhouse Theatre Group, Inc/Playhouse on Park when making your funding decisions.

We would like to express our gratitude for the critical role each of you have played in supporting the arts in Connecticut. Thank you so very much for your time.